SARON MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Saron Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA)
510 Main Street
St. Joseph, Michigan 49085

Website: www.saronlutheran.org
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
Phone: 269-983-1273
Facebook:www.facebook.com/saronlutheranchurchst.joseph

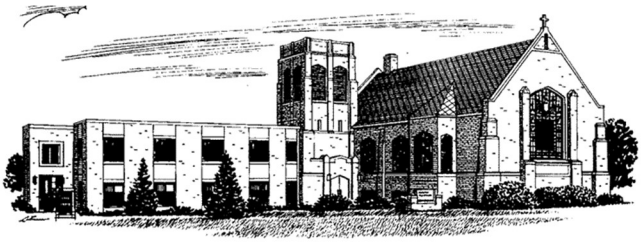
The Rev. Joan Oleson, Pastor
Home: 269-983-2475
Email: oleson@saronlutheran.org
Patrick Blanchard, Vicar
Cell: 616-460-7150
Email: pblanchard13@live.com
Marcus Roll, Music Director
Email: roll1mc@gmail.com
Irma Gorman, Organist
Amanda Bradley, Admin Assistant
Cell: 419-306-5780
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
Bradley717@gmail.com
Megan Savage, Bookkeeper
Email: financial@saronlutheran.org
Emily Gaul, Child Care

Typical Sunday at Saron:
Fall, Winter and Spring:
8:30am Worship On-Location
11am Worship with Zoom Option
Nursery Available
9:40 Learning Hour for Ages 2-Adult

Summer of 2022 (beginning June 5):
9:30am Worship
On-Location and via Zoom
Nursery Available
No Learning Hour

We hold in prayer:
The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton,
Presiding Bishop, ELCA
The Rev. Dr. Craig Satterlee, Bishop of the
North/West Lower Michigan Synod, ELCA
The Episcopal Diocese of Western MI

Our Companion Synods:
Christian Lutheran Church of Honduras
Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea
Lutheran Church of Latvia
Saron's Mission: *Joyfully sharing God's love for all!!*



PASTOR ARTICLE FOR FEBRUARY 2022

It seems an overriding theme voiced at today's annual meeting was gratitude. Gratitude for ministry accomplished, gratitude for people, gratitude for what is to come, gratitude for God among us. Gratitude is not a bad place to start out a new calendar year in the church. Gratitude is a good place to be in this season of the church year that we call Epiphany.

Epiphany means revelation. It is a time when we are called to pay attention to God revealing God's self. At our worship, we hear God revealing God's self in Jesus through the visit of the magi, who came from afar, to reveal God coming to the nations. We hear of Jesus' identity being revealed through the changing of water into wine and in the synagogue, the telling of his mission.

At annual meetings, we have the opportunity to reflect on where (and when) it is we see God at work, where God has revealed God's self for us and through us. In doing so, we confess whom we proclaim God to be - for us, for our neighbors, for the world. And, we proclaim where we get the strength and power to do this amazing work we are called to do. Thanks be to God who gives us the will and the strength to perform the tasks we are given. Yes, gratitude is a good place to be - today, and every day.

If you would like a hard copy of Saron's annual report, you may pick one up at the church or call the church office and ask to have one mailed to you. They are also available electronically.

Pastor Joan

LOOKING AHEAD

Ash Wednesday is March 2, with worship at 12:15 and 7pm.
Watch for details on Mid-Week Worship during Lent.
One step closer to Spring!

Update in Covid-19 Precautions

During the January council meeting, we decided to maintain the current Covid-19 precautions, which includes wearing masks in the building. Most meetings and studies have been moved to Zoom as leaders feel is appropriate. We will continue to monitor the situation for necessary adjustments.

General Information

OFFICE HOURS

Pastor Joan and/or Vicar Patrick
Monday-Thursday Mornings
Amanda Bradley (Admin Assistant):
Mondays & Thursdays 8am-noon
Wednesdays as needed
Helping Hands Office Volunteers:
Wednesdays 9:15am-11am (approx)
Megan Savage (Bookkeeper):
Tuesdays & Thursdays 5:30pm

When Pastor is out of town, emergency pastoral care information can be obtained by calling the church office (269/983-1273) or contacting the council president.

Note: Emails for Pastor should be addressed to oleson@saronlutheran.org to ensure privacy. Emails to Amanda and the church office should be sent to info@saronlutheran.org.

Caring and Sharing

IN OUR PRAYERS

Richard Schalon is at the Whitcomb Tower Retirement Center, St. Joseph; **Bernice Koski** and **Kathleen Preston** are at Woodland Terrace, Bridgman.

Happy Birthday Wishes to Saron's Members!
February 2022

Feb	2	Lindsay Gilmore-Gaspari
	3	Makayla Bradley
	5	Erin Vollmer
	6	Linda Dipert
		Mary Alice Brunner
	8	Ernst Knauf
		Krystina Walker
	9	Frieda Williams
	10	Aiden Ashley
	15	Robert King
	21	Ryan Talbert
	22	Darlene Kiessel
		Hailey Talbert
		Vicar Patrick Blanchard
	26	Wendy King
	28	Cheryl Houser

Happy Anniversary Wishes to Saron's Members!
February 2022

We don't have any on record at this time but
Happy Valentine's Day
to all our loving couples!

"God's Blessings for a very happy day and year round!"

If there are any omissions from the birthday or anniversary list, or if a date is incorrect, please let us know so we can get it correct in the future!

IN SYMPATHY

We extend our condolences to Ruth and family upon the death of her husband,
Jerry Jay Stelling,
on January 9, 2022.
A private memorial service will be held for the family.
The obituary may be viewed at https://www.cappadonafh.com/obituary/Jerry-Stelling

BAPTISM

We welcomed Nora Jean, daughter of Katie & Michael Lewis, into the family of Christ on Sunday, January 2, 2022. Sponsors are Katie Shuler and Brittany Weidmann.

Proud big brother is Tucker.
Congratulations, Nora!

A NOTE FROM THE VICAR

To paraphrase T. S. Eliot, "February, not April, is the cruelest month." In fact, it's a bit of a teaser month. Some days it is bitter cold; others the sun comes out and melts the snow. Every February I get caught in this kind of funk that says "just hang in there – Winter will be over soon." Then I realize there is much I am missing with "just wait it out" mentality. It has occurred to me that some Christians live their lives waiting for the Second Coming and fail to notice the beauty of the moment. As I wander the nooks and crannies of St. Joe, I am always finding something new. This is a vibrant town with much to offer and to savor.

More importantly, Saron is a vibrant congregation that is very much in tune with the needs of the community. Despite the nasty weather, I see people continuing to find ways to reach out. With an active Soup Kitchen, no one goes hungry. I hear people asking who needs prayer and routinely praying for them. Through Bible studies and prayer groups, people are keeping up with events and each other. Not every church community does this. It may be cold outside, but the hearts of Saron's people are warm. I appreciate the chance to learn and to be a part of such a congregation.

P. S. THANK YOU for all the cards and well-wishes during my mother's death and recent health issues. Prayer makes a huge difference in life and I have certainly felt yours.

Peace,
Vicar Patrick

FORTIFY & fly

Three years! Can you believe it's been three full years since we started donating towards our pledges to Project Fortify & Fly? It's gone fast in some respects yet we've been thrown some pretty significant obstacles. Specifically, nothing gets in the way of collecting donations quite like closing the church doors and having worship over Zoom for many*, long*, months. That could easily have brought our collections to a complete halt. It didn't. Your perseverance and joyful giving has been nothing short of awe-inspiring.

At the end of December 2021, also the official end of our 3-year pledge period, we had collected $373,637 towards our pledge total of $367,205. We exceeded our pledges!

The money may be In but we know the work is far from done. We will continue to keep you updated until the projects that are under the Fortify & Fly umbrella are complete and the funds have been spent. **Be sure to check out the information on the pews on the back cover!**

Worship

NURSERY

Nursery service is available during both services. In order to utilize the space most effectively, this option is most directed towards our youngest members and guests. For pre-school age children that occasionally need more physical and/or emotional space, quiet activities are available in the narthex. There are also clipboards with coloring pages, as well as children's bulletins, to assist kids as they transition into participating in worship. **It's vital to embrace having family units in all stages in our congregation and as such, we gladly welcome wiggles and giggles in worship!**

The primary goal of the nursery is to provide a safe environment when needed to facilitate a meaningful worship experience for families negotiating life with children. We recognize that may not look the same for all and are always open to hearing concerns and suggestions.

For health and safety reasons, only the approved childcare providers assigned for that day should be in the nursery space during worship. Nursing mothers are always welcome!

NEW MEMBERS

Please let Pastor know if you are interested in joining Saron, or would like to learn more about the Christian faith in the Lutheran tradition.

PRAYER GROUP

Join us Mondays at 11am for a time of quiet reflection and prayer, which includes lifting up the requests offered on Sundays at worship or via other means. We meet in the sanctuary.

ZOOM COFFEE HOUR

We will continue the Wednesday morning Zoom fellowship at 11am through the winter. The Zoom link remains the same from week to week and is at the bottom of the weekly email sent on Thursdays.

ALTAR FLOWERS

You can sponsor a week by using the link in the weekly email or by calling the church office. Make sure to note any special occasion to be recognized in the bulletin. Flowers are $35 per vase. Please follow up with a check to Saron with "Flowers" on the memo line. Thank you for helping to beautify our worship services! Feel free to take them home after the last service and enjoy. **Simply return the vase to Saron to be reused.**

FACEBOOK

We love to share pictures of Saron's ministry on our Facebook page and we get great feedback. It is our practice not to put names with the pictures. If you have questions, or prefer your picture not to appear, please contact Pastor.

SUNDAY SCRIPTURE READINGS

As you prepare for worship, you are invited to read and reflect on the Scriptures for the day.

February 6: Fifth Sunday after Epiphany
Isaiah 6:1-8 [9-13]
Psalm 138
1 Corinthians 15:1-11
Luke 5:1-11

February 13: Sixth Sunday after Epiphany
Jeremiah 17:5-10
Psalm 1
1 Corinthians 15:12-20
Luke 6:17-26

February 20: Seventh Sunday after Epiphany
Genesis 43:3-11, 15
Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40
1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50
Luke 6:27-38

February 27: Transfiguration of Our Lord
Exodus 34:29-35
Psalm 99
2 Corinthians 3:12 – 4:2
Luke 9:28-36 [37-43]

Youth

Our youth group did not meet in January due to an increase in Covid cases in the area. We are still planning to meet on February 20 after the 11am service at the Bradley Home for a pool party with taco bar. We'll send out an email with more information closer to the date. It's going to be a splashtastic good time! Friends are welcome.

Are you In grades 6-12? This group is for you! Contact Merrily at merrilyannsmith@gmail.com with any questions.

Learning

Saron is a congregation seeking to become more fluent in the first language of faith, the language of Scripture, in order that we might live into our calling as a people renewed, enlivened, empowered and sent by the Word.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

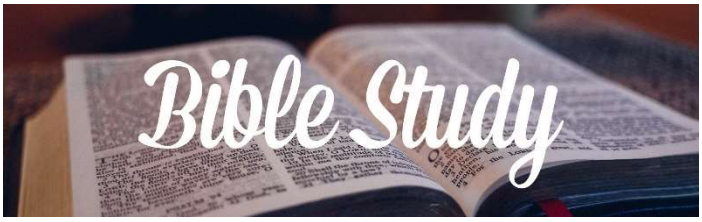
SUNDAY LEARNING HOUR

We offer a time of age-appropriate Bible studies between the two services, from **9:40-10:30:**

- **Grades 5 and Under** meet in the Sunday school classroom.
- **Confirmation Students** (Grades 6-8) meet in the confirmation classroom.
- **Adult Forum** meets in the upstairs lounge.

At this time, we will be utilizing masks, per the current BCHD guidance. We look forward to seeing everyone!

We are always looking for volunteers to assist with Sunday School, even just once. Please contact the church office at 269/983-1273 or by email at info@saronlutheran.org with any interest.



TUESDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY

During February, the Tuesday Evening Bible Study will be meeting via Zoom. **Each Tuesday at 6pm, we will read and discuss the lessons and Gospel for the following Sunday**. Please join us for an hour of study and conversation. If you do not typically receive the weekly email notification with the Zoom link from Bob or Don, please use the contact info below to be added to the list. Looking forward to seeing you! **All are welcome!**

"Iron Sharpens Iron and One Person Sharpens the Wits of Another"

If you have any questions, feel free to call, text, or email: **Bob Kynast (269-921-2786, bobkynast@gmail.com) or Don Hafer (269-985-3637, hafer.don@gmail.com).**

THURSDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

We've temporarily moved our Thursday sessions at 9:30am-11am to Zoom.

We continue our study entitled **"Fierce: Women of the Bible and Their Stories of Violence, Mercy, Bravery, Wisdom, Sex, and Salvation" by Alice Connor.** Cost of the book is $11.50. Contact Pastor with your order.

Please let Pastor know if you ever have any questions or need the Zoom link. **This class is open to all interested in attending.** You are welcome to join any time, for one session or for many.

1ST SUNDAY BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

We are back in business again on February 6, 2022 at 6:30 pm. It will be determined closer to the date whether we will meet on-location and/or have a Zoom option. Look for this information in your email. Either way, our book for discussion **is "Radium Girls" by Kate Moore**. *During the years of the First World War, the newly discovered element of radium is touted as the wonder drug for medicines to cosmetics to tonic water. Hundreds of young women worked amidst the glowing dust of radium-dial factories glad to have these coveted jobs until they began to fall mysteriously ill. Their story morphs into one of the biggest scandals of the early 20th century, and a "battle for workers' rights that will echo for centuries to come".* -Amazon

Looking ahead to March 6, we chose **"*100 Days of Happiness: A Novel*" by Fausto Brizzi**, as a good read. Lucio Battistini just found out he only has 100 days left to live. He now has the chance to spend the rest of his life making every moment count. You will learn in 100 chapters exactly how he does. Smiles, tears and plenty of hope in this one. Come join us. We welcome all who enjoy reading and want to share that joy with others.

To make sure you are on the email list for Book Group information, please contact Kathy Cowall (269) 428-0354 or kcowall@ otmail.com.

"Everything in the world exists in order to end up as a book." – Stephanie Mallarme

MEN'S MONTHLY DEVOTION

The February Saron Men's Devotion will be on Zoom at **9am on Saturday, February 5, 2022.** The Zoom link will be on the Saron Update that week. Join us on Zoom for a devotion and BYOC (Bring Your Own Coffee)!

Contact Dennis Lundgren with any questions at dennis.lundgren@me.com

LIVING LUTHERAN MAGAZINE

It's time to renew your "Living Lutheran" subscription! The cost is $9. Please send cash with a note or a check with an appropriate memo. There is no official form – your payment is considered a subscription.

The Living Lutheran is the magazine of the ELCA and has lots of feature stories about ministry around the country, as well as ELCA news. Subscribing through Saron provides a significant cost reduction over individual subscriptions while still allowing it to be delivered directly to your home.

Women of the ELCA

DEBORAH CIRCLE

Due to the continuing high Covid numbers, Deborah Circle will **NOT** meet on-location on Wednesday, February 9, 2022. The 7pm meeting will be by Zoom only. That information will be sent by Denise Cook close to February 9. The lesson will be from the January/February issue of Gather magazine, session 1, titled *The kingdom of God: beautiful feet: announcing the reign of God*, page 18. Colleen Lundgren will be the study leader.

Contact Melanie McCammon at 269/983-4622 for more information about this group.

Hospitality

SUNDAY SNACKS

Who doesn't love a snack during a time of fellowship in the narthex after the service? If you would like to be a Sunday snack host, sign up via the link in our weekly email or call/email the office so Amanda can sign you up. We are asking for donations of individual, store-packaged treats at this time. Please plan for 30 to partake. Thank you!

Outreach

NOISY OFFERING

We receive a noisy offering (or those not-so-noisy bills) on the first Sunday of each month. These gifts are sent to ELCA World Hunger. Thank you for your generous offerings!

BENTON HARBOR SOUP KITCHEN

Simple food, honestly sourced and lovingly made creates connections, gives fuel to the fight, and starves ignorance and apathy. – Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen

On December 23, Matt Bradley, Pastor Joan, Mary Alice Brunner, Jim Manore, and Dave & Kathie Bradley were busy preparing and packing 138 sack lunches. The lunches included hot dogs, chips, a tangerine and cookies

provided by Frieda Williams, Kate Ulrey, Marilyn Frey, Deanna Deaton, and Mary Kynast.

Also, a special thank you to Jan Taylor, who was busy knitting hats this fall. They were given to grateful Soup Kitchen guests.

If you feel comfortable helping to prepare a sack lunch at the Soup Kitchen or providing cookies, please use the link in the weekly email to sign up or contact Kathie Bradley (269-921-4665).

Thank you to all who continue to support this ministry with your time, contributions, and prayers: *Joyfully sharing God's love for all!*

ELCA GOOD GIFTS PROGRAM

When asked to fill a need, Saron is a congregation that steps up! During the 2021 Advent season, we sponsored **21 goats, 17 piglets, 14 honeybee colonies, and 17 broods of chicks** for the ELCA Good Gifts program. These gifts**, totaling $2,010**, will be sent around the world where they will do the most good.

Thanks to everyone, especially the kids with their piggybank contributions, for making this happen. We are making a difference!

INCLUSIVITY TASK FORCE

The Inclusivity Task Force is committed to extending a welcome to all. Our congregation adopted the following welcome statement and is a **Reconciling in Christ** church.

As a community of faith who *joyfully shares God's love for all*, we believe our lives and faith are strengthened by diversity. We strive to be a community who welcomes people of every ability, age, citizenship status, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, language, marital status, political perspective, race, and sexual orientation. We are committed to the work of racial equity. Whatever life's circumstance, we openly welcome and value you. We celebrate God's unconditional love and respond joyfully to your presence here. All are welcome. You are welcome.

You will see the RIC logo on various communications and signage for our church. Watch for more updates about our continued inclusivity journey!

If you ever have any questions or need clarification, please feel free to call any one of the task force members:
Connor Ashley: cashley1837@outlook.com
Laurel Gacek: 269/470-6062 or mlmg2445@sbcglobal.net
Laura Hicks: 517/930-0579 or lhicks42@gmail.com
Darlene Kiessel: 269/313-4062 or kiessel@me.com
Diane Madej (Open Hearts. Open Church): 231/670-0328 or dianemadej234@gmail.com
Pr Joan Oleson: 269/983-1273 or oleson@saronlutheran.org

INTERFAITH ACTION

Interfaith Action (swmichiganinterfaith.org) is a coalition of over 40 faith communities in Allegan, Berrien, Cass, St. Joseph, and Van Buren Counties. Some members of Saron attend meetings and work with various task force groups. One of the goals of Interfaith Action is to promote understanding and respect for diversity.

Support

The Support Committee will be meeting on the second Tuesday of each month at 8pm. Meetings will continue to be held on Zoom. Contact Don Hafer with any questions at 269/985-3637.

STOCK DONATIONS

Saron partners with TD Ameritrade, a brokerage firm, to accept stock donations. If you would like to donate stock, email Joe Ulrey at josephulrey@yahoo.com to receive more information. Thanks!

Facilities

HELPING HANDS (Previously Golden Hammers)

We do all sorts of things from building maintenance to preps for worship in the sanctuary to assembling bulletins and newsletters and so much more. We meet on Wednesdays around 9:30am and know you are invited – whatever your age, gender, or ability. There is a job for you to use your helping hands.

February 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 6pm Evening Bible Study	**2** 9:30am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee	**3** 9:30am Bible Study 6pm Bells 7pm Choir	**4**	5 9am Men's Devotion & Breakfast 9am Council Retreat
6 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning 11am Worship with Zoom Option	**7** 11am Prayer Group	**8** 6pm Evening Bible Study 8pm Support Meeting	**9** 9:30am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee	**10** 9:30am Bible Study 6pm Bells 7pm Choir	**11**	12
13 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning 11am Worship with Zoom Option	**14** 11am Prayer Group **NEWSLETTER ARTICLES DUE**	**15** 6pm Evening Bible Study	**16** 9:30am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee	**17** 9:30am Bible Study 6pm Bells 7pm Choir	**18**	19
20 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning 11am Worship with Zoom Option	**21** 11am Prayer Group	**22** 6pm Evening Bible Study	**23** 9:30am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee	**24** 9:30am Bible Study 6pm Bells 7pm Choir **Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen Day**	**25**	26
27 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning 11am Worship with Zoom Option	**28** 11am Prayer Group					

SARON LUTHERAN CHURCH
510 MAIN STREET
ST. JOSEPH, MI 49085

Website: www.saronlutheran.org
Email:info@saronlutheran.org

A Congregation of:
The North/West Lower Michigan Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

FEBRUARY 2022 Newsletter

Come and Get Them!

Our new sanctuary chairs are due to be delivered early to mid April! That means we need to clear the space and since we are unsure how long that will take, due to not knowing how popular the pews may or may not be, we want to get started NOW.

January 24 – February 1
Saron members

February 2 – 15
Open up to friends

February 16 – 28
Open up to other synod folks/churches

March 1
Open up to local woodworkers and general public

FREE for the taking! (donations accepted)

Removal is the responsibility of new owner. Pew can be reserved ASAP and removed at a later date as long as it's gone **before March 28.**

Starting Inventory

Each pew being offered is tagged with a number or letter on the side facing the wall:
2 of the 6'5" Length (these will go FAST)
4 of the 10'2" Length
18 of the 12'6" Length

Height of all: 34" Depth of all: 23"

Contact

You **must** finalize your selection with **Ed Staude** before removing anything from the building. He will also coordinate getting into the church for selection and/or removal.
636/288-1016 or **staude.edmund@gmail.com**